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COMPTROLLER STEFAN MYCHAJLIW OPPOSES NFTA RIDESHARING FEE

Comptroller wants a discussion on the need for a fee, not a decision

(Buffalo, New York) – Erie County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw is calling on the Erie County Legislature to hold public hearings on the NFTA's plan to charge a fee to taxpayers that utilize ridesharing at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport.

In a letter to the Erie County Legislature, Comptroller Mychajliw blasted the imposition of a hurtful fee on taxpayers without having discussions with the public or Erie County Legislature. Officials from the NFTA should publicly explain to the Erie County Legislature exactly why this fee is being imposed and what costs are involved in ridesharing operations at the airport.

"I will fight to end the misguided philosophy of money grubbing bureaucracies and government to 'tax anything that moves,' including ride sharing vehicles. This new fee should have been a discussion, not a decision. This region needs to stop making the solution to every problem a new fee or a tax. We don't even have ridesharing here yet, and unelected bureaucrats are already raiding the pockets of taxpayers and visitors. It's absurd," said Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw.

Ridesharing services were approved by the New York State Legislature for upstate starting June 29th and with the approval came huge costs. The State Legislature linked their approval of the services to the imposition of new taxes and fees on its use. The fee proposed by the NFTA will be an additional \$3.50 per ride tacked on top of already imposed state taxes and fees.

"My colleagues and I fought hard to bring this service here for three main reasons. It will enhance public safety, reduce transportation costs, and provide convenience. For no reason at all, other than greed, we are chipping away at those outcomes and I think that is wrong," said Mychajliw.

The NFTA is heavily funded through tax dollars, receiving significant annual grants from Erie County based on revenue generated from sales tax. In the 2017 budget, Erie County taxpayers contributed \$19,912,678 from sales tax revenue to NFTA operations. The almost \$20 million from Erie County taxpayers comes from 1/8th of one-percent of sales tax revenue.

The NFTA will also receive New York State mandated mass transit aid that comes directly from Erie County property tax revenue that totals \$3,657,200 in 2017. The total amount of tax dollars given to the NFTA that is directly from Erie County tax dollars is \$23,569,878, almost \$24 million.

“We want to know why the implementation of ridesharing at the airport will have a cost. I do not believe the way to pay for a temporary one time cost is to burden taxpayers with the imposition of a never ending and excessive fee,” said Mychajliw.

Comptroller Mychajliw sent a letter to the Erie County Legislature asking that they host a committee discussion on this topic and work together to roll back the fee. In the Comptroller’s letter, he references the challenges ridesharing might cause the airport but stresses the importance for those challenges to be shared with lawmakers who may help provide solutions.

“Right now, we need a discussion on this topic, not a decision,” concluded Mychajliw. Comptroller Mychajliw stressed his belief that allowing people to arrive at the airport via a ridesharing service should not present a costly and ongoing burden on the NFTA, and therefore shouldn’t be funded through a new fee. First the Comptroller wants to know exactly what the cost to the NFTA will be, and he wants an open discussion on the options to fund it.

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